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CITYVIEW'S

BUSINESS JOURNAL



Local cobbler keeps WORN SHOES WALKING

After 42 years in the business, Jamie Blackford continues repairing hundreds of pairs of shoes each month, proving that quality craftsmanship still has a place in the Des Moines metro.

By Gracie Kayko

When shoes start to wear down and their soles fall apart, some people head to a department store or shop online for a new pair, while old ones are donated or end up in the trash. But when they can be saved, Des Moines-area residents can take their beloved shoes to one of three independently owned and operated shoe repair stores.

Jamie Blackford, the owner and master cobbler of Blackford Shoe Repair, sands down a black pair of boots in his workshop.

FEATURE

The Des Moines shoe repair market is dominated by locally owned master cobblers — people who specialize in repairing footwear and leather goods — rather than large chains. Blackford Shoe Repair in Urbandale, Des Moines Shoe Repair in Historic Valley Junction and El Zapatito Shoe Repair, located in Radio City Mobile Home Park in Des Moines, are among the metro's best-known repair businesses.

Jamie Blackford is the owner and sole repairman of Blackford Shoe Repair. He shared his experiences with us.

In the last year, Blackford has experienced an influx of shoes in need of repair. As the economy weakens and everyday necessities become more expensive, people are opting to repair what's broken instead of buying new.

"When the economy is bad it's cheaper for people to get their shoes repaired than to buy new ones," Blackford said.

Inside Blackford's white brick building on the corner of 69th Street and Douglas Avenue, shoes of every style and size pile up along the long glass display counter. Everything sitting up front has accumulated over the last two weeks while Blackford was on vacation in New Mexico for his niece's wedding. With no one else to help, he will be busy for the foreseeable future.

From work and cowboy boots to running shoes, tennis shoes, Birkenstocks, umpire shoes, children's shoes, heels, dress shoes and UGG boots, Blackford will take nearly any pair in need of repair.

"Any kind of shoe — you name it, I got it," he said.

An introduction to the trade

Blackford, who was born and raised in Des Moines and graduated from Hoover High School, started repairing shoes part-time at age 18 in Beaverdale after meeting someone in the business.

He has now been in the trade for 42 years, working in several businesses in Des Moines and even in Florida.

He spent about four years in Florida, working in Sarasota, Clearwater and the Tampa Bay area before moving back to Des Moines and taking a job repairing shoes for Red Wing. After saving enough money while working there, he branched out on his own and started Blackford Shoe Repair. He has operated at 6833 Douglas Ave. in Urbandale for the past 27 years.

Blackford celebrated his 60th birthday back in May and has no plans for retirement in the near future.

"All the stuff I got here," he said, gesturing to



Blackford Shoe Repair at 6833 Douglas Ave., Urbandale.

the shoes lining the counter and walls and stacked in boxes, "it'll be awhile before I retire."

Blackford runs his business as a one-man operation. At one point, he had three employees, but they have all since passed away.

Since then, he has brought in people and taught them the skills of shoe repair, but none have stayed. For now, he alone answers the phone calls, balances the books and repairs the more than 500 pairs of shoes scattered throughout his shop.

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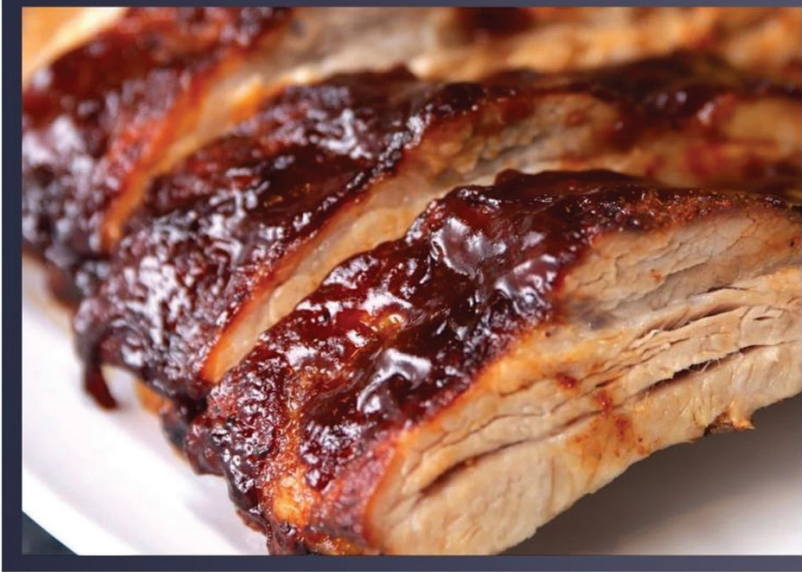
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MENU

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Bourbon Sriracha BBQ Pork Ribs [1/2pan]
Hickory Smoked Sliced Beef Brisket [1/2pan]

Sides:

- Iowa farm-fresh heirloom tomatoes [48oz.]
- Fresh & festive fruit, such as watermelon, blueberries, and strawberries [48 oz. each]
- Iowa Sweet Corn [1/2 pan]
- Cheesy Party Potatoes [1/2 pan]

Dessert: Strawberry Shortcake [6 - individual shortcakes]

- Sliced Strawberries [48oz]
- Vanilla Whip Cream [48oz]

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Always something new

Although some might be overwhelmed by the amount of shoes and work Blackford has to do, especially after a vacation, Blackford enjoys what he does.

“Every shoe is different,” he said.

That’s what he likes most about the job. There is always something new to keep him busy.

Blackford said the shoes that come into his shop seem to arrive more damaged each year, but that has kept the work interesting. He doesn’t back down from a challenge or turn down service unless he knows, from his years of experience, that the shoes are beyond saving.

He actually prefers the more difficult repairs

About 15 years ago, he was brought a pair of boots that seemed destined for the trash.

“I mean they completely fell apart,” he said. “You could see through the shoe.”

But with determination, Blackford managed to put them back together. That particular repair has stayed with him ever since.

Amid the challenging jobs, Blackford also receives a lot of Birkenstocks, which are relatively easy and less time-consuming to repair.

Because he is the only one at and behind the counter, and depending on his backlog and the condition of the shoes, customers can expect a turnaround time of about one month to six weeks.

As busy as ever

He is as busy as ever, and so is Des Moines Shoe Repair, he said. While he was away in New Mexico, he had to turn away some customers and refer them to Des Moines Shoe Repair.

Blackford primarily performs half-sole and full-sole replacements, while also handling glue-sole repairs and, when time allows, purse and luggage repairs. A half-sole repair consists of replacing the front portion of the outsole where toe and tread wear appear. A full-sole repair includes the front and midsole, along with the heel.

He primarily works with three materials for sole repairs: rubber, crepe rubber and leather.

The condition of the sole isn’t what determines price.

“A full sole is a full sole,” Blackford said.

Instead, the type of material used on the shoe and whether the repair requires a half sole or full sole determine the cost.

Blackford measures and cuts all of the material by hand, uses a stitching machine to attach the new sole and finishes the repair with a professional S-1000 shoe repair finishing machine, which sands the material down to the welt — the a strip of leather, rubber or plastic that connects the upper sole.

The finishing machine roars to life as Blackford maneuvers one shoe at a time across the fast-spinning sander, creating a smooth finish.

In addition to sole replacements, Blackford polishes and performs button repairs for his customers. However, he prefers to refer zipper repairs to his neighbors next door at Geysa’s Tailors & Boutique, an alteration shop.

For Blackford, the work that does not involve repairing the shoes is the hardest part of the job. Going back and forth between his workspace and the front counter, answering phone calls and keeping track of more than 500 pairs of shoes is his least favorite part. But because he is the only employee, every responsibility falls on him.

Blackford Shoe Repair is open Tuesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and is closed Sunday and Monday. Customers can stop by in person or call Blackford’s business to inquire about their shoe repair needs. ■

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Borrower Name	City	County	Cong. District	\$ Amount	Jobs Created	Jobs Retained	Existing Jobs	New Vs. Existing	Business Type
Go Yard Sports LLC	WATERLOO	BLACK HAWK	02	\$1,122,500	5	2	NEW	Sports and Recreation Instruction	
Jordan Family Enterprises, LLC	Waterloo	BLACK HAWK	02	\$123,300	5	17	EXISTING	Full-Service Restaurants	
Goodwin Insurance, Inc.	WATERLOO	BLACK HAWK	02	\$45,500	0	0	NEW	Insurance Agencies and Brokerages	
GANSEN FULFILLMENT LLC	SPENCER	CLAY	04	\$45,000	2	2	EXISTING	Other Justice, Public Order, and Safety Activities	
CENTER OF THE MAC LLC	WAUKEE	DALLAS	03	\$240,000	1	1	NEW	Full-Service Restaurants	
Rise Overhead Door LLC	Spirit Lake	DICKINSON	04	\$339,000	2	0	EXISTING	Other Foundation, Structure, and Building Exterior Contractors	
Tracey Properties LLC	CHARLES CITY	FLOYD	02	\$92,000	0	1	EXISTING	Lessors of Nonresidential Buildings (except Miniwarehouses)	
HIGHPARK CONSTRUCTION LLC	LOGAN	HARRISON	04	\$50,000	2	1	NEW	Residential Remodelers	
DAYS INN NEWTON	NEWTON	JASPER	01	\$920,000	0	11	EXISTING	Hotels (except Casino Hotels) and Motels	
Ironwood Equity Corp.	CEDAR RAPIDS	LINN	02	\$990,000	7	7	NEW	Commercial and Industrial Machinery and Equipment	
NBT Enterprises LLC	Cedar Rapids	LINN	02	\$307,000	2	0	EXISTING	Offices of Physical, Occupational and Speech Therapists, and Audiologists	
Rumble Inc	Cedar Rapids	LINN	02	\$149,000	1	15	EXISTING	Drinking Places (Alcoholic Beverages)	
Iowa Powerhouse LLC	Cedar Rapids	LINN	02	\$88,000	2	2	NEW	Fitness and Recreational Sports Centers	
DIVERSIFIED BUILDERS LLC	CEDAR RAPIDS	LINN	02	\$50,000	0	1	EXISTING	Residential Remodelers	
Hitchin Post Grill	BEVINGTON	MADISON	03	\$200,000	0	2	EXISTING	Full-Service Restaurants	
DJAAGOU A. EXPORT, L.L.C.	Muscatine	MUSCATINE	01	\$50,000	0	2	EXISTING	General Line Grocery Merchant Wholesalers	
SoDak Manufacturing, LLC	Akron	PLYMOUTH	04	\$553,000	2	0	EXISTING	All Other Miscellaneous Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing	
Rocha Group LLC	ANKENY	POLK	03	\$40,000	1	1	NEW	Facilities Support Services	
OTP, LLC	Johnston	POLK	03	\$1,547,000	3	15	EXISTING	Fitness and Recreational Sports Centers	
NABRU MANAGEMENT PARTNERS LLC	WEST DES MOINES	POLK	03	\$1,425,000	11	2	NEW	Homes for the Elderly	
Titan Industrial Storage LLC	Council Bluffs	POTTAWATTAMIE	04	\$1,783,000	2	30	EXISTING	General Freight Trucking, Long Distance, Truckload	
PAPPY'S GUN SHOP LLC	UNDERWOOD	POTTAWATTAMIE	04	\$9,700	0	0	EXISTING	Other Personal and Household Goods Repair and Maintenance	
Huff Logistics Group Inc.	ELDRIDGE	SCOTT	01	\$2,502,500	0	0	NEW	General Freight Trucking, Long Distance, Truckload	
CRESTON TOBACCO LLC	CRESTON	UNION	03	\$50,000	0	0	EXISTING	Tobacco and Tobacco Product Merchant Wholesalers	
1421 Sunset Drive, LLC	Norwalk	WARREN	01	\$763,000	2	0	EXISTING	Offices of Physical, Occupational and Speech Therapists, and Audiologists	
Iowa Aviation Services Corp	NORWALK	WARREN	01	\$443,000	0	12	NEW	Other Support Activities for Air Transportation	
BLACK HAWK TRANSPORT INC	SIOUX CITY	WOODBURY	04	\$5,000,000	2	42	NEW	Couriers	
WISEPACE PROPERTIES LLC	SIOUX CITY	WOODBURY	04	\$1,773,700	2	38	NEW	Limited-Service Restaurants	
HUGO'S CONSTRUCTION LLC	SIOUX CITY	WOODBURY	04	\$15,000	0	2	EXISTING	Residential Remodelers	

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Paul Bouwers, Jason Uhlenhake, Ben Buenzow, Tyler Fromm, Chad Lyons, Taylor Carey. Not pictured: Faith Dorn-Spiece, Steve Plym

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Netherton named VP and CFO of Heart of America Group

Heart of America Group, a hospitality and real estate development company, has named Shane Netherton as vice president and chief financial officer. Netherton will be based at the company's Operations Support Center in Des Moines. Netherton brings more than 19 years of finance and accounting experience to the role. He joins Heart of America Group from Bernau Capital Partners, where he served as a senior member of the leadership team, overseeing a diverse portfolio spanning retail, real estate, manufacturing and banking.

MercyOne names Baxter as new president and CEO

After a nationwide search, Robert Baxter, FACHE, has been named the new president and CEO of MercyOne. He will succeed Michael Taylor, who has served in an interim capacity since the beginning of January. Baxter brings more than 30 years of health care experience, most recently serving as president of the Toledo market for Bon Secours Mercy Health, the largest health care system in Ohio. There, he created strategies to improve trauma performance, increase retention and recruitment, regionalize and negotiate new joint ventures while leading Mercy Health to a CMS Five-Star rating. In joining MercyOne, Baxter returns to the state where he earned his MBA and MA in hospital and health administration at the University of Iowa.

Haaland named Des Moines Community Playhouse executive director

The Des Moines Community Playhouse announced that Chelsea Haaland has been named executive director. She joins Katy Merriman, artistic director, as part of the theatre's leadership team. Haaland joined The Playhouse staff on June 15, immediately assuming the role of executive director. She most recently served as the related arts curriculum facilitator for the Waukee Community School District (CSD), Iowa's third-largest district, where she promoted collaborative culture-building and organizational effectiveness in support of the district's artistic programming. Under her guidance, Waukee CSD was the 11th district in the United States to be recognized as an Educational Theatre Association Premier Community for Theatre Education.

Hardman steps down as LSI president and CEO

Lutheran Services in Iowa (LSI) announced that President and Chief Executive Officer Renee Hardman stepped down from her role July 1 to pursue other interests.

Belay named executive director of Iowa Center for Children's Justice

The Iowa Center for Children's Justice named Steve Belay as its new executive director. Belay brings more than 30 years of experience in family law to the role, with a career focused on ensuring children and families are heard and supported in complex legal matters. Before joining the organization, Belay practiced law in Decorah, where he handled a broad range of family law cases, including custody, adoption, termination of parental rights and surrogacy. He also served as an assistant county attorney, working on juvenile court matters such as child welfare and delinquency cases.

Grimes Area Chamber of Commerce announces leadership transition

The Grimes Area Chamber of Commerce announced a transition in executive leadership. Jennifer Chittenden, IOM, assumed the role of president of the organization on May 11. Chittenden succeeds Brian Buethe, who is departing the organization after nearly two decades of service. Buethe led the chamber and a number of economic development initiatives.

SCI welcomes five new members to board of directors

The Science Center of Iowa (SCI) announced the appointment of Jose Garcia, Matt Weber, Brian Mathey, Lauren Ugulini and Lawrence Cunningham to its board of directors. They will support the organization's mission to inspire Iowans along their journey of lifelong science learning through strategic leadership, advocacy and community engagement. Their appointments come as SCI says it continues to expand science learning opportunities, strengthen community partnerships and invest in innovative experiences that engage learners of all ages.

DMU welcomes Kozor as new director of corporate, foundation and grants relations

Des Moines University Medicine and Health Sciences welcomed Elizabeth, MBA, as its first-ever director of corporate, foundation and grants relations. Kozor will provide leadership in those strategic fundraising efforts for the university, building high-impact relationships locally and nationally to drive significant philanthropic investment in DMU.

DMU Clinic - Behavioral Health welcomes Rice

Julie Rice, LMHC, joined Des Moines University Clinic - Behavioral Health as a licensed therapist. She will provide individual and group therapy to clients ages 18 and older. Her experience includes helping people in outpatient mental health settings, using a range of approaches to teach coping skills and support change such as talk therapy, problem-solving strategies and techniques to manage thoughts, behaviors and emotions.

Lead DSM honors Andeweg and Federal Home Loan Bank of Des Moines with Distinguished Leadership Awards

Lead DSM recognized two leaders whose impact has helped strengthen Greater Des Moines. The organization presented the A. Arthur Davis Community Leadership Award to Robert Andeweg and the Workplace Community Leadership Award to Federal Home Loan Bank of Des Moines during its Annual Alumni Reunion on June 24. The awards celebrate the individuals and organizations whose leadership creates lasting impact through service, collaboration and commitment to community. ■